

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-25. (Canceled)

26. (Previously Presented) A method of absorbing hydrophobic water-immiscible liquids from a mixture of such a liquid with water comprising:

treating the mixture with a material consisting essentially of wood fiber which has been modified by esterification of hydroxyl groups in the lignin of the wood fiber material such as to render the material more attractive to hydrophobic water-immiscible liquids while still retaining hydrogen bonding to maintain the structural integrity of the material; and optionally filtering or removing the hydrophobic water-immiscible liquid from the mixture.

27. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 26 wherein the esterified material has a weight gain of 5-40% as compared to the unesterified material.

28. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 26 wherein the esterification is acetylation.

~~31~~ 29. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 26 where the material is thermomechanically pulped wood fibre.

~~32~~ 30. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 26 wherein the modified material is spread on to the surface of the water.

~~33~~ 31. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 26 which comprises drawing through the mixture an article which comprises the modified material within an outer covering through which the ~~oils~~ hydrophobic water-immiscible liquids may pass.

34 32. (Currently Amended) A method of absorbing transformer oil from a mixture of such a liquid with water comprising:

treating the mixture with paper-material which has been modified by esterification of hydroxyl groups in the lignin of the paper-material such as to render the material more attractive to transformer oil while still retaining hydrogen bonding to maintain the structural integrity of the material.